

SERIAL STORY

ELUSIVE ISABEL

By JACQUES FUTRELLE

Illustrations by M. KETNER

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presented himself from the desk, and

looked at him. "What?" he said in a hoarse voice.

"The name of the man who is to be the ambassador to the United States," he said, "is Mr. Grimm."

"He is not a man," he said, "he is a woman."

"A woman?" he said, "a woman?"

"Yes," he said, "a woman."

"A woman?" he said, "a woman?"

"Yes," he said, "a woman."

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"Yes," he said, "a woman."

He caught himself wondering at the perfection of the deliberate indifference with which he looked at him.

"What?" he said, "a woman?"

"Yes," he said, "a woman."

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DUTY OF UNCLE SAM

BUILDING OF GOOD ROADS PROGRAM FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

WOULD HARDLY FEEL TAX

General Welfare Clause of Constitution Gives Congress Power to Build Roads—Federal Aid Would Give Mighty Impetus to Road Building.

BY HOWARD H. GROSS.

About once a year the post office department sends out word to the various postmasters throughout the country where the roads are bad, threatening to suspend rural mail delivery unless the roads are put in acceptable condition. This is right and proper. It is an outrage to expect the mail carrier to wade through a sea of mud to carry the mail to the farm home. It might not be necessary for him to do so. At times the roads get so bad that the mail wagon must be abandoned, and the trip is then made on horseback, carrying only the letters. Sometimes the delivery has to be abandoned for days at a time on account of road conditions.

Why the roads should be so bad the country over, when nearly everybody wants a good road is a strange anomaly, and this unfortunate situation will probably continue until the people approach the good roads problem from the right angle.

It is a tremendous undertaking to gravel and macadamize the principal highways of the country—it means the building of 400,000 or 500,000 miles of roads, and would cost between a billion and a half to two billion dollars, or from \$15 to \$20 for every man, woman and child in the land. This seems like a colossal outlay and it is, but the money could not all be spent at once. It would take probably twenty years to do it, so it would be at the rate of perhaps one dollar per year per capita. The department of agriculture estimates that the actual saving to the people by good roads would be at least \$2.50 per person per year. If this estimate is anywhere nearly correct, and it probably is approximately so, then the saving to the people alone by good roads would pay for them in five years' time.

There is no fact better demonstrated in economics than that the building of good roads adds to property values many times the cost and brings social, educational and economic benefits that make the building of roads the best paying investment that any community or state can make.

The question is, how ought this matter to be handled? In the writer's opinion the first duty is to the federal government. It is high time for it to get busy on this problem. The money Uncle Sam raises is by indirect taxation and this tax the people scarcely feel and there is very little complaint about it. It hurts us more to pay one dollar as a tax through the tax collector's office than it does to pay five times the amount by indirect taxation. Under the general welfare clause of the constitution, congress has the power to build roads. It also has specific authority to do so for those roads used for rural delivery, and these comprise nearly all the main highways of the country.

Suppose, then, we estimate an expenditure of \$1,500,000,000 to be made upon highways, jointly by the nation, the state and the township or county, letting the federal government contribute one-third the amount, and prorating the money between the states on a joint basis of population and road mileage. This would give a state like Illinois between \$26,000,000 and \$27,000,000. The funds to be provided for from time to time by long-time, low interest bonds. The tax per capita to carry these bonds at three per cent, when all are issued, would be about 15 cents per year—three or four cents! Then let the state pay one-third from a general tax levy, or, better still, by a bond issue, and one-third paid locally by the township. It is common practice for the state to contribute to road building under what is popularly known as the state aid plan—the townships have been doing the little that has been done and doing it without help for many years. The new feature of the proposition is the federal contribution, for which there is ample authority and for which there is a precedent and a paramount need.

Within the last few years there has been a great hue and cry throughout the land for waterway improvement; conventions have been held and the demand made that the federal government contribute \$500,000,000 to that end, at the rate of \$50,000,000 a year for ten years. The point the writer desires to make is that where it is possible for one ton of freight or produce to be carried by water, there would be thousands of tons moved by wagon over the public highways, and that if the amount of money demanded for waterway improvement were applied to highways, it would be hundreds of times more beneficial, and the benefits would reach all of the people.

The government is using about 900,000 miles of public roads for rural mail delivery and these are post roads within the meaning of the Constitution. Congress has express power to build and maintain post roads, and if it can build and maintain them it certainly could help to do it.

The question may be asked whether a bond issue of \$500,000,000 for aid in road building would be at all burdensome. By referring to the statement of the treasury department, one will find that the present bond issue amounts to about \$11 per capita, and the annual interest charge is 28 cents. The issue of \$500,000,000 of bonds would carry the bond issue up to approximately \$16 per capita and the interest charge to 44 cents. At that rate it would be the smallest bonded indebtedness per capita of any of the leading countries of the world. As against the \$16, Great Britain has a debt of \$88 per capita, Germany \$19, Italy \$92, and France \$144. It is perfectly safe to say that if the government would issue and expend \$500,000,000 of bonds in aiding the construction of permanent highways, the people would never know that an additional tax had been imposed and would never feel the payment. This step would give a mighty impetus to road building, and in ten or fifteen years probably 400,000 miles of good roads could be built, and this would revolutionize transportation and would add immeasurably to the pleasure of country life, and would add several times the amount to the property value of the nation, and give us better schools, higher social life and a higher standard of civilization.

There is a widespread demand for a parcels post, and as congress usually responds to popular demand, and always does if the clamor is loud and long enough. So it is quite probable the parcels post will be tried out.

Let the government help build good roads—the highways over which the children must go to school, the doctor to reach the suffering and over which must pass every bushel of grain and every bale of cotton raised—the road which reaches every field, every farm home and every market town. The people everywhere demand good roads. Roads are universal; waterways are sectional. Good roads mean a saving in transportation far greater than can be accomplished in any other way. Good roads mean better schools, more social life and a higher standard of living; they mean progress and civilization.

GRADES AND GOOD ROADS

Highways Traveled by Heavily Loaded Vehicles Should Be Kept Down to Three Per Cent.

A one per cent grade on a road means a rise of one foot for each hundred feet of distance traveled up the hill. A ten per cent grade means ten feet rise in each hundred feet traveled. A one per cent grade, then, means that in traveling up hill one mile an ascent is made of 52.8 feet, while a ten per cent grade means a rise in altitude of 528 feet in a mile. Accurate tests have shown that a horse which can pull 1,000 pounds on a level road can pull only 810 pounds on a rise of one foot in fifty, and on a rise of one foot in ten he can pull only 250 pounds. These facts show that the greatest load that can be hauled over a road is the load which can be taken up the steepest hill on that road, or through the deepest mud hole. It is therefore advised that all highways traveled by heavily loaded vehicles should be kept within a three or four per cent grade if practicable. To do this may require a change of location to get around hills, always keeping in mind that the lower the grade the larger the load may be hauled and the cost of haulage kept at the lowest point.

Birds a Help to the Farmer. The demand for the protection of wild birds was once based solely on humane and esthetic grounds; now the demand is coming to be based in addition on economic grounds, which will commend it to a larger number of men and insure it a more careful hearing in the court of public opinion. Bird slaughter not long ago was decreed because the native songsters were being killed at the behest of millinery fashion.

Now another note is sounded. The increase of insect pests and consequent reduction of the harvests has corresponded with the decrease of the birds. In addition to filling their craws with insects numerous wild birds feed on weed seeds, and weeds are a handicap in agriculture.

In several states increasing safeguards are being thrown around birds because of their worth as aids to agriculture.

Russia's Fight on Tuberculosis.

The first "white flower day," which was observed in Russia on May 3, was a "success beyond the hopes of the most sanguine," says the *Russische Correspondenz*. Throughout the nation on that day men, women and children offered for sale tiny white flowers. The proceeds of the sales were handed over to the League for the Prevention and Cure of Tuberculosis. Money in large quantities was collected, the smallest and poorest hamlets contributing their share. It is not to be wondered at, because Russia is really the land of the dread malady. The trying climate and unspeakable sanitary conditions make it a fruitful ground for the development of the disease, and statistics show that in late years there has been a steady increase in its ravages. The manner in which the people responded on the first "white flower day" shows that they appreciate the conditions.

What Did She Mean?

"On bended knee I begged her for a kiss." "And what did she say?" "Told me to get up and be practical."—*Louisville Courier-Journal*.

GOOD